DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 782 RC 004 413

TITLE	Basic Steps in Planning Resident Outdoor Education Programs.
INSTITUTION	Nassau County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, Jericho, N.Y.
PUB DATE	1 Sep 69
NOTE	9p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.55
DESCRIPTORS	Activities, Conservation Education, Curriculum Design, Interdisciplinary Approach, *Outdoor Education, *Planning, *Program Development, *Resident Camp Programs, Scheduling, Teacher Role, Teaching Guides

ABSTRACT

Intended to serve as a planning guide for teachers who become involved for the first time in the resident camping phase of an outdoor education program, this document answers the question of where to initiate the planning process and what sequential form the process should follow. Site familiarization is the first step to be taken, and information from this step can be used later in student-parent orientation. Selection and organization of the curriculum come next and rely heavily on local resources and the needs of the student who should be involved in this step. Time scheduling is next and includes items which are constant such as mealtimes, activity periods for the major portion of the day, evening programs, and inclement weather provisions. Organization and scheduling of student duties, such as dining hall chores and bunk cleaning, complete the list. A final suggestion is to use checklists so that nothing will be overlooked in preparing for smooth program operation. (BD)

ED040782

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BASIC STEPS IN PLANNING RESIDENT OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

A Definitive Statement to Assist
Teachers Involved in
Resident Experiences

Prepared with the Cooperation of the Nassau County
Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)

RC004413

PREFACE

"Basic Steps In Planning Resident Outdoor Education Programs," was written to serve as a planning guide for teachers who for the first time were to become involved in the resident camping phase of the outdoor education program.

Basically, the question of where to initiate the planning process and in what sequential form should such a process follow, was a definite problem to many classroom teachers.

It was as a result of these existing factors that this guide came into being.

September 1, 1969
Jericho, New York

Dr. Harry C. Thompson
Director - BOCES
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BASIC STEPS IN THE PLANNING OF AN OUTDOOR AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAM AND SCHEDULE

The success of a resident experience in Outdoor and Conservation Education depends primarily upon the thoroughness of the pre-planning program. The combined and cooperative planning efforts of the teacher, curriculum coordinator, students and other involved individuals makes for a more meaningful educational experience. The inter-disciplinary approach to planning will greatly enhance and broaden the scope of learning and experience. Outdoor education is not a one subject or a one skill learning situation.

Becoming familiar with the resident site and all of its possibilities and available resources in the varied areas of Outdoor and Conservation Education is the initial step that should be taken by the teacher and all other staff members who will participate in the pre-planning program. To many teachers, there is no substitute for a first-hand observation and orientation of the actual area where residency will occur. During this orientation visit to the resident site, it is advisable to obtain film and slide pictures of existing facilities and activity and program areas. This will help greatly in the orientation of students and parents, an important phase of the pre-planning program.

The selection and organization of curriculum material in light of the existing environmental resources available at the

resident site is the next important preparatory step. It is in this stage of the pre-planning program that the students become involved. In the curriculum-oriented program, the student must be made aware of the relationship between that which he has learned in the classroom and that which he or she will observe in an outdoor environmental situation. The curriculum material, when identified with subject categories, may help the student prepare for the outdoor experience. Subject matter which can best be learned and observed in the out of doors in the areas of ecology, geology, aquatic science, astronomy, anthropology, history or social studies, etc. should be identified and placed within the curriculum program that is to be followed when in the outdoor environmental situation. This process of "selectivity of subject matter" will result in a more efficiently planned outdoor environmental experience. As a result, the experience will also be more objective and meaningful to both student and teacher.

It is also within this stage of program planning that the special interests of students are considered. Not every special interest of each individual student can be met; however, if the special interests of students are known, it is at this stage when they can best be incorporated into the program. To determine special student interests it may necessitate obtaining information from other members of the professional staff, teachers of special subjects, guidance counselors, etc. Once again, it is important to keep in mind the inter-disciplinary approach that is necessary in the planning process.

As the pre-planning program progresses it should be kept in mind that any needed equipment and supplies for a particular subject area must be considered. As each area of subject matter is selected for study, it is necessary to consider the materials needed for the conduct of the program. It is always advantageous to plan for multiple use of any equipment and supplies that can be used in as many areas of study as feasible. This cuts down on the amount of equipment that has to be transported to and from the resident area.

Once it is determined what subject matter is to be covered and once plans have been made for the teaching of the proposed curriculum areas, the next step is to formulate a time schedule. In every schedule where time is the basic factor, there are generally accepted "constants". These "constants" refer to definite times set aside as permanent scheduled fixtures. For example, the time for rising each morning, meal times, and the time for retirement at night are all considered "constants" and they necessitate that the daily schedule be planned around these permanent set periods of time. Other time periods which may be classified as "constants" are rest hour, clean up periods, and recreation hours.

When inserting a curriculum subject unit into a scheduled block of time, it is necessary to have a reasonable knowledge of time required to cover the subject material and the distance to travel and/or the area that must be covered to conclude or complete the planned work. It is not necessary to conclude that all activity periods shall be of equal time in duration.

Trips to educational centers outside of the confines of the camp may take more time than the normal periods of study within the immediate area. Nature hikes and other special group activities may also involve large periods of time. It is important, however, that the time schedule be regimented to the extent that the "constants" can be maintained.

In addition to planning for a normal day time schedule, it is necessary to consider special activity programs for evening periods. These scheduled periods may be either of a recreational nature, strictly academic, or a combination of both. Many groups prefer the latter combination whereby the children are provided with an opportunity to socialize and recreate. Appropriate activities for this time of day may be camp fires and song fests, square dancing, dramatic skits by the students, and slides and films. When planning for a recreational type program, it is advisable to let the children select their activities or at least make suggestions resulting from their own interests. Once again, it must be kept in mind that any evening program should be limited in time so as to permit the children to retire on schedule.

The rainy day program is a necessary and important aspect to be considered in all pre-planning activities. However, there should be a very definite attitude and policy inherent in the minds of staff and children alike concerning their activities during periods of inclement weather. This policy should reflect the determination on the part of all concerned to pursue the out of doors program <u>as scheduled</u> unless a decision of the staff determines that the degree of inclement weather is injurious to

the health and welfare of the student. Students who have physical ailments which are affected by certain weather conditions should be excused from participating in the outdoor activities. Rainy day programs may include such activities as lectures, slide and film presentations, laboratory sessions (leaf pressing-microscope work-specimen classification), notebook reports, group discussions and research reading.

Finally, it is important to organize and schedule the special groups of students who will be assigned to camp. These responsibilities include serving as dining hall aides, bunk cleaning squads and other individual and group assignments that are to be assumed by the campers. This type of organization and scheduling can be done on a rotating basis so that every student will be assigned to each of the several responsibilities that are important to an efficiently operated program. Duplicated schedules can be made up and circulated to each student so that they may be aware of their assignments before arriving at camp.

In addition to the more formal phases of the pre-planning program which relate more directly to the formulation of curriculum content, scheduling, special programs and student organization for assigned responsibilities while in residence, a teacher must also keep in mind other important items usually referred to as the "check list."

"Check list" items are those details which may or may not be the direct responsibility of the teacher, but have a very important bearing on the thoroughness of the pre-planning program and the smoothness of program operation. This "check list"

includes among other detailed items, the following:

1. Student health report as submitted by the school nurse. The purpose of obtaining a health report is to ascertain any limitation in a student's participation. (special diet, allergies, physical disabilities, etc.)

2. Obtain evidence from the proper school authority that the group is completely covered in so far as liability and insurance are concerned.

3. Transportation arrangements. (Departure and returning times, adequate space for students and equipment.)

4. Students' personal wearing apparel and other equipment. (Ascertaining that only required materials and clothing are prepared for trip.)

5. That students are aware of their responsibilities while in residence and that their conduct be in accordance with school regulations and policies.

In most cases, the school principal and/or other assigned school personnel assist the teacher in orienting students and parents regarding trip details, procedures, and responsibilities.

The overall attitude and enthusiasm of students and teachers, in addition to their ability and willingness to acclimate themselves to existing and changing conditions, makes for a pleasant and meaningful experience. A degree of flexibility inherent in a well-organized and comprehensive program is an additional ingredient that establishes confidence and ease with staff members. It is not always possible to adhere strictly to the written plan. Inclement weather and unforseen interests and desires often necessitate a deviation from the planned script. To be able to do this with the least amount of confusion is advantageous. Actually, alterations and changes

are not necessarily an exception to the rule in this type of program. Spot changes or alterations are or should be made for the improvement and enrichment of the program and for the benefit of the student. As needs and interests constantly change, so should the program and procedures be implemented to more directly meet the changing needs and interests.